



INDUSTRY

# SAFETY ALERT

## No Go Decisions on Wildfires

**Location:** Wildfires in the Southern Interior

**Date:** July 2023

**Details of Close Call / Serious Incident:** We are heading into a difficult time and may be on our own on wildfires more than we are used to. Most industry crews are motivated and production oriented. It is often difficult for them to sit and wait for conditions to improve.

In two recent situations on wildfires, operators made No Go decisions and did not attempt to achieve their assigned tasks.

They based their decision to not continue work on the 18 Watch Out Situations that contribute to wildfire entrapments and burn overs.

In the first situation a buncher operator decided not to attempt to cross a deep gulley late in the morning above the fire. After turning around and getting to the Safe Zone the machine blew a hose and was down for over an hour. The fire blew up while he was making repairs. If the breakdown had happened at the end of the line the operator and machine would have been in peril.

In the second situation the crew was directed to construct a guard downhill to the fire. There was a delay in getting started. The crew made a No-Go decision

### WILDFIRE WATCHOUTS CREW

- NO SUPERVISOR OR LEAD HAND ON SITE
- WORKERS UNSURE OF PLAN, CONFUSED/AGGRESSIVE/PANICKED
- LACES NOT ESTABLISHED, COMMUNICATED OR CHECKED
- WORKERS WITH NO OR POOR COMMUNICATIONS
- WORKERS UPSLOPE OR DOWNWIND OF FIRE
- RESPONSE TAKING PLACE AT NIGHT

### FUEL & TERRAIN

- HEAVY CONTINUOUS FUEL LOAD &/OR "FLASHY" FUELS
- STEEP SLOPES, ROUGH GROUND, GULLIES
- UNBURNT FUEL BETWEEN CREW AND MAIN FIRE

### WEATHER

- WEATHER WARMING AND DRYING
- CROSSOVER - TEMP HIGHER THAN RH
- RH LESS THAN 25%
- WIND INCREASING AND/OR CHANGING DIRECTION

### FIRE BEHAVIOR

- INCREASING FLAME LENGTH
- SMOKE VOLUME INCREASING
- SMOKE COLOR GETTING DARKER
- SPOT FIRES INCREASING

MacLeod Forest Services 



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and went back to their Safe Zone. Shortly after leaving the fire blew up and burned over the proposed line.

## Learnings & Suggestions:

1. Know and recognize the Watch Out situations.
2. Avoid making plans where everything has to go right in order to achieve the objective. What can go wrong likely will, and often at the worst possible time. A breakdown in a bad location may be a life-threatening situation.
3. Be aware that most entrapments and burn overs occur within 20 minutes of a fire blowing up. Use the Fire Behaviour forecast and on-site observations. Leave early. It is better to be in the Safe Zone an hour too early than a minute too late.
4. Always have LACES established. Be aware that most of the time operators and machines only have one escape route out the line they have constructed. Reduce the acceptable risk.
5. Review the material in the Wildfire Entrapment Avoidance and Survival training package.
6. When in doubt, back out!



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